

A STUDY OF INAM KACHACHI'S NOVEL *TASHARI* AS DIÁSPORA LITERATURE

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ملخص البحث

يتناول البحث الحالي مشكلة الشتات ما بعد الاحتلال الأمريكي للعراق في عام 2003. تتحدث رواية إنعام كجه جي، طشاري (2013)، عن امرأة عراقية مسيحية وأم تعمل كطبيبة تروي قصة عائلة عراقية مشتتة تسعى إلى وطن ينزلق من أيدي مواطنيها الذين يبحثون عن مكان آخر للانتماء إليه. وتستعرض الرواية الظروف المتأخرة، بعد عام 2003، التي جعلت المجتمع العراقي منقسما على نفسه. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو توضيح كيف كان وضع العراق في الماضي وكيف أصبح بعد أحداث عام 2003 وتسلط الضوء على السياسات الداخلية / الخارجية التي أدت إلى تشتت العراقيين وفقدان التراث الوطني العراقي. تنتهي الدراسة بخاتمة التي تلخص النتائج الرئيسية للدراسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أدب الشتات، إنعام كجه جي، المعاناة الجماعية، غزو جورج بوش للعراق، الطائفية، الحنين، المقبرة الإلكترونية، مسيحيي العراق، الموصل.

ABSTRACT

The present research deals with the phenomena of diaspora and the aftermath of the US occupation of Iraq in 2003.

Inam Kachachi's novel, *Tashari* (2013), is about a Christian Iraqi woman, a doctor and a mother who relates the story of an Iraqi dispersed family seeking a homeland that is sliding from the hands of its citizens looking for another place to belong to. The novel previews the late circumstances, after 2003, that makes the Iraqi Muslim-Christian community split on itself.

The aim of the study is to demonstrate how the status of Iraq was in the past and how it becomes after 2003 shedding light on the internal/external policies that led to the dispersion of the Iraqi people and to the loss of national Iraqi heritage.

The study ends with a conclusion that sums up the main findings of the study.

Keywords: Diaspora Literature, *Tashari*, Inam Kaachachi, collective suffering, George Bush's invasion of Iraq, sectarianism, nostalgia, electronic cemetery, Iraqi Christians, Mosul.

INTRODUCTION

Diaspora and the crisis of identity in the host country is a favorite mix in Kachachi's novels and the focus of attention in the present research. Inam Kachachi, a Christian Iraqi journalist and novelist, presents in her novel, *Tashari* (2013), the rubble of years of wars and the open endings to the unknown. She not only begins to crystallize the features of modern novel and materialize it technically after 2003 but also she monitors the suffering of the Iraqi expatriates and their affinity between exile and nostalgia for a homeland, which becomes a painful memory after the war.

In its form, *Tashari* can be understood as a post-colonial text that seeks to resist political corruption. The novelist points out that Diaspora is a hybrid not previously assigned by Iraq: "We are a people whose fathers and grandfathers did not know migration nor think about it. Why should they migrate, having in their land the best goods of the world?"¹ The writer stresses that partisan and civil conflicts are the only reasons for immigration, and that she has lived enough in

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Paris to understand the concerns of exile, safety and freedom. She compares the evolution of the situation in Iraq with what happens of splits and differences in some Arab countries like Syria and Yemen. She writes about Iraq when life in it has been relatively quiet, and intellectually and culturally rich to remind the readers how her homeland has been before.² In Kachachi's novels, there is no space for narrow ethnic, sectarian, or religious affiliations. Despite her departure from her country, Iraq is present wherever she goes and remains steadfast in her memory. However, she does not eliminate what is rooted in her spirit. Her three novels are part of her deep-rooted affiliation of Iraq, whose sons are one flesh and will not be scattered by sectarianism—a thing that Iraqis never know before George Bush's illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003. Iraqi fiction revolution in its pre-exile phase started after 2003.³ The novel does not deal with war but with the aftershock of the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq in 2003. The blind war, as Kachachi calls it, makes the Iraqis forcibly exiled from their homeland and become preys to psychological torture as if they were escaping paradise of loss to the fire of safety.

Tashari is written by a woman at the time of distress and war. It speaks about the "Iraqi tragedy,"⁴ the exposure of the fragmentation over decades and the banishment of the Christians of Iraq, both inside and outside Iraq.⁵ The great earthquake of the American occupation of Mesopotamia, and the successive tremors that followed enrich Kachachi with experience.⁶ More aware of pain and suffering, Kachachi makes her novel an outlet through which she expresses her vision of how the Arab citizens face all their calamities. The novel documents all that is happening and is actively involved in confronting all these conflicts and disagreements.⁷

DIASPORA IN OLD AND RECENT TIMES

Tashari is, about Iraqi Diaspora in the four parts of the country, going to be seen through the story of an Iraqi doctor who migrates after having reached the age of eighty.

Diaspora, from the Greek word "scattering," refers to the dispersion of people from their homeland. Diaspora Literature refers to literary works that are written by authors who live outside their native land.⁸ Diaspora Literature can be defined by its contents, regardless of its geographic origin. Kim D. Butler, in his book *Defining Diaspora, Refining Discourse*, defines diaspora as the dispersal of people from their original homeland.⁹ Until recently, the term was most closely associated with the Jews and was originally coined to describe the Jews experience in 586 B.C. According to *Global Diaspora* by Robin Cohen, the term "diaspora" was extended in the 21st century to refer to people who are dispersed to regions outside their native homeland, for example, the migration of the Irish over the period 1852 to 1945 following the famine. This gives the Irish events a great similarity to those that propelled the Jewish and the African-American diaspora.¹⁰ In the Arab world, when Britain withdrew from Palestine on 14 May 1948, the Zionist state was proclaimed. Therefore, two-thirds of the Arab population of Palestine lost their homes and became refugees; as a result, Palestinian diaspora emerged.¹¹ The scarring historical calamities, Babylon for the Jewish, famine for the Palestinian, lend a particular coloring to these Diasporas in their vital historical experiences. Victims of diaspora must survive so powerfully in their homeland or even return there becomes an important focus for social mobilization and the mold in which popular culture and political attitudes are formed.¹² However, one might wonder how *Tashari* is classified as Diaspora Literature. William Safran who offers a list of defining

characteristics of Diaspora Literature answers this question: (1) the disperse to two or more locations, (2) the collective mythology of homeland, (3) alienation from the host land, (4) idealization of returning to the homeland, (5) and an ongoing relationship with the homeland.¹³

Accordingly, the new diaspora is the migration and dispersion of the individuals away from their homeland by forces such as globalization, neoliberalism, and imperialism. Such forces create economic, social, political, and cultural difficulties for the individuals in their homeland compelling them to migrate.¹⁴ Therefore, *Tashari* can be considered as a diaspora novel that responds to the lost-home issues such as dislocation, identity, nostalgia, survival of discrimination, and cultural deracination. Masko Adrianna investigates the religious conflicts, which were raging in Iraq since 2003, in the aftermath of George Bush's invasion of Iraq — the next disaster in the modern history of Iraq following the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the economic blockade (1990-2003). All these dramatic disasters affected most of the Iraqi people.¹⁵ The traumatic experiences from which the Iraqis suffer are depicted into literary writings as J. Ghazoul states that literature and art are complex constructions that resist the flashiness of TV programmes and media. They are both indicators of reality and a forecast into future.¹⁶ Thus, literature in general and fiction, in particular, signifies a picture of the Iraqi culture and its modern history.

After the occupation of Iraq in 2003, a tendency emerged from the phenomenon of nostalgia as a means of self-treatment. Nostalgia took different shapes whether social, political, artistic, or caring for the popular heritage to regain cheerful images of the past. Diaspora writers who are far away from their homelands and cannot return show a decrease in their nostalgic feelings as s/he remembers a particular incident when his/her country is exposed to disasters and calamities, as what happened in Iraq after 2003. The greater distance that separates diaspora writers from their home, the more nostalgia and pain is intensified. It is what is observed in the behavior of many Iraqi writers in expatriations far distant from their homeland. Nostalgia is a very complex psychological case. Nostalgia or homesickness is known as a human phenomenon since ancient times. Sometimes it is seen as a psychological abnormal behavior if accompanied with severe and painful symptoms. Nostalgia in Arabic literature is known as "Alababh"—Alababh means a fanciful feeling that generates a sensation of pain as a result of fear of not being back home again. Nostalgia or Alababh takes a variety of images such as the feelings of euphoria sometimes mixed with pain. It also produces feelings of patriotism, forgetfulness, or estrangement from one's homeland. Some diaspora writers left their countries after being coerced to severe torture (physical or intellectual) in their homeland. Consequently, nostalgia to their homeland becomes a great icon in their writings.

The tendency of the diaspora writers to use the Iraqi slangs and the vernacular language in their artworks helps them to ease their pain, while they are in exile, and keep their memory of their heritage. This is what the Iraqi novelist Kachachi has done in her novel *Tashari*. Diaspora writers tried to compensate the feeling of homesickness by showing a strong desire to borrow from parables and anecdotes, sayings and aphorisms. Kachachi focuses her interest on folklore and promoting Iraqi slang words in order to praise or defame the situation of Iraq before/after 2003. However, this situation is not new to the Iraqi culture and occupied a wide dimension in Diaspora Literature in recent years, especially after the occupation of Iraq. Diaspora Iraqi writers dealt with the descriptive, social and political aspect, with an emphasis on images of heritage that appeal to broad categories of readers.¹⁷ By saturating her novel with Iraqi slang words and the

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Iraqi vernacular language,¹⁸ Kachachi defies the pain of diaspora and contributes to prolonging the life cycle of the slang words and the Iraqi vernacular language. She finds a way to alleviate the pain of diaspora by using Iraqi slang words and vernacular language as a peaceful way of protest and resistance. The Diaspora Iraqi writer, Kachachi, draws from the Iraqi heritage most of her writings. Her novels reveal her whole fulfillment to Iraq that supports and inspires her despite all the havoc.¹⁹

TASHARI

Inam Kaachachi (1952—) mourns the loss of paradise. Iraq of yesterday, before the wars of sects grind it and before the disintegration of the social fabric was paradise but it was unfortunately turned into an unbearable hell. *Tashari* (2013) deals with the situation of the Iraqis who are exposed to diaspora outside their country.

The novel begins with a brief description of the main female character, Wardia Iskandar, an archetype character, was born in Mosul and lived in Baghdad until 1954 after she had finished her bachelor degree to work in the South of Iraq. As a new graduate, she supposedly had to serve in the countryside for one year, but she resided in Al-Diwaniya for more than "fourth of the century to abandon it unwillingly at the age of eighty."²⁰ Al-Diwaniya, where all sects live peacefully and tolerantly, is not only the place where Wardia starts her career as a doctor but also the place where she starts her new life as a wife and a mother.

The simple life in Al-Diwaniya, which abandons all sorts of complication and ignores fake modernity, harmonizes with Wardia's humble personality. Although Wardia does not belong either geographically or ethnically to that rural area, she has needed a long time to adjust herself with the conventions and ethics of that society. With the passage of time, she becomes part of that social fabric. Her prayers harmonize with their prayers, and she shares their joys and sorrows. The city, despite its rural tribal merits and naive people, has left its mark on the heroine-doctor: "The city had tattooed her not on the skin but rather on the spirit, dissimilar to the tattoo of any rural women" (*Tashari*, 33). It is not just a location, but it embodies the historical journey of Wardia's life so that it almost becomes part of her identity. There, her romantic adventure begins. Through flashback, Wardia indulges the readers in her love story with Gerges. They have got married and have three children—Hinda, Jasmin, and Buraq, who are later distributed on the continents of the world, like millions of young men fleeing a country ravaged by wars and sectarian strife. Wardia's children grow up and determine to immigrate because they believe that their country is no longer safe to live in anymore. Buraq decides to go to a Caribbean city while Hinda settles in Canada, and the last daughter is obliged to settle in Dubai because of the awful conditions of Iraq after the Anglo-American occupation. At the age of eighty, Wardia becomes a refugee, living in a small village on the outskirts of southern Paris.²¹ War and the deadly circumstances in Iraq oblige her to leave to Paris after the members of her family are disarrayed all over the world. Miraculously, the novelist Kachachi incarnates the concept of Diaspora in the family of the heroine-doctor describing it like a body slain by the chopper of a butcher, that is, the colonizer:-

Like a butcher who carries a chopper in his hand to cut the body into fragments to be dispersed everywhere. The liver is thrown into North America and the lungs flow to the

Caribbean leaving the arteries floating over the Gulf. As for the heart, the butcher takes his sharp knife, the one devoted to delicate operations, slays the heart and carefully uproots it from its sofa between Tigris and Euphrates throwing it under the Eiffel Tower in Paris. ... With their feet, the tourists chase her heart. Like a ball ... it is swollen ..., kicked by foot, floated over the net, or shot at the basket. What damage there is in a few animations! (Tashari, 17)

Wardia's family is a miniature of the Iraqi society. Therefore, the rupture of the Iraqi family reflects the rupture of the Iraqi society as a whole. While Dr. Wardia uses a surgical knife to save her patients' lives, the butcher (the colonizer) uses it to tear down the colonized countries. Although the instrument is one, its purposes are different; it is brutally appropriated to commit a crime. The doctor assimilates her heart to the heart of her country. The heart that is kicked like a basketball is Baghdad, which is torn apart by the greediness of the Anglo-American colonizers for the black gold—Oil, as reflected below:

The butcher vanishes and steps away from the cartoon film, where a wicked witch sticks with a magic wand lifting it up in the air to strike a fertile spot of land that has been safe from earthquakes and guarded between two rivers inhabited by a million of palm trees, overflowing with black gold... . The witch strikes people of this land, throwing them out into the four corners of the world and scattering them through the maps while they are dizzy not knowing what is wrong with them. She wants to revenge because she is blunt and wicked while they are merciful and forgiving, feeding on dates and the popular poetry of Abuthiyaat, because she is made of paper, pigment, and of moving graphics while they are a rock of boulder. Thou shalt giggle and send forth the bird of Alibadeed to fly over their heads. Who knows the bird of Alibadeed, sneaked out of legends, the one that hovers over the roofs of the safe houses to scatter lovers and disperse them in the land? (Tashari, 17-18)

Daringly, Kachachi weavers between reality and the fabulous making the reader think that everything is real.²² She resorts to **magic realism** where reality becomes more exotic than imagination and the unreasonable becomes reasonable. The novel combines reality and imagination, seriousness and humor by using verbal or spatial magic when Kachachi describes Iraq as a body cut by a butcher as well as spatial images when she talks about the suppositional e-cemetery, which will be mentioned later in this research. She employs verbal magic when she treats metaphors as a reality and moves through the folds of her mind between past and present, reality and fantasy. Kachachi manipulates an irreducible magic to satirize the colonizers by portraying them as a bloodthirsty butcher or a witch feeding on the bodies of her victims and dispersing them by her sporadic magic wand. At the same time, she employs a realistic description that stresses the disasters encountered Iraq after 2003 as if they were common phenomena; hence, she revises the marvelous. Kachachi draws the readers between two views of reality in Iraq after/before the 2003 occupation— a tragic realistic view as well as a cynical magic catastrophic view alternatively. Moving through the mind of the narrator between past and present, the reader will clearly see the narrator's viewpoints intersect as she depicts Iraq before and after 2003 to reflect the contradiction that the country experienced before and after the occupation. At other times, the narrator's fanciful and sarcastic viewpoints coincide as Kachachi criticizes the current state of her country. The readers also can trace magic realism in the social/political dimension of the novel. Magic realism does not mean that it has nothing to do with the political reality; rather, it offers a way of commenting on the rotten power in disguise. Kachachi lets her smart readers read what she does not write, as reflected in the expert below:-

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Iraqis are born alone, but they die in groups. Even the one leader finds his successor... the ones multiple leaders appear. As death becomes collective so does the governance. Sovereignty in a country led by groups and parties becomes collective. ... Collective death becomes cheaper than a single death... . In a country where people buy wholesale chicken, wholesale New Zealand sheep thighs, wholesale dye containers... and pin on the khaki uniforms wholesale medals of valor... . Everything becomes wholesale— parties, sects, massacres and the officials' guardians. **Robbery of billions not millions.** Even the **one dictator becomes wholesale dictators.** She does not know ... whoever protects and loots her, whoever ... respects her white hair, and whoever demands to cover her hair. She wishes to slap the ignorant, cruel and the ill-bred to re-educate them thrusting them into the womb of their mothers to come to life again as distilled water growing in a bottle that is not polluted. She speaks to herself to go down to the streets to tear the masquerade and the masked garments worn by the barbarians to unfold their original faces. They do not come down from the wombs like that ... not like that.

(*Tashari*, 250)

The author believes in the ability of the novel to reflect the psychological prospects to monitor the **collective suffering** and social breakdowns in times of war. Wardia attempts to count the number of the dead among her colleagues, but the number is greater than to be counted in a country where killing becomes collective. The bounties of the country that are stolen become wholesale. Everything becomes wholesale except birth; therefore, the number of the dead is far greater than the number of the new births this is why the novelist describes Iraq as a "country of death" (249).

In addition to the distinctive creativity of an Iraqi innovator like Inam Kachachi, she shows resistant to confront the ugliness of the continuous aggravated politics by the beauty of her renewed creativity. She considers great novels as "the daughters of wars."²³ Characters in most her novels experience the consequences of wars.²⁴ Among those characters is Wardia who announces her revolution against moral disintegration that swept Iraq after the political events of 2003. She wishes if she could tear apart the masks of hypocrisy and would like to bring them back to the womb of their mothers not polluted by the claws of the society. Wardia's life is a reflection of the history of Iraq, and the dispersion of her family represents the dispersion of Iraqi society. As death becomes collective so does governance. Sovereignty in a country led by parties becomes collective. Like most people who live in the diaspora, Wardia listens to the news of her country and watches "the dead in mass graves." Even though she has left to Paris, she can feel the smell of the corpses accumulated in the streets of pilots, journalists, and university professors—they are all killed collectively.

Furthermore, the author borrows from the ancient Iraqi folklore—a thing that results in respect for the local heritage. This is another feature of magic realism in the present novel. Although sadness and pain dominate the atmosphere of the novel, a glimpse of hope never disappears from it. By giving the occupiers the feature of fantasy, evil and revenge, Kachachi describes them like a legendary bird, known as Alibadeed, which is an image borrowed from the Holy Qur'an and legendary stories. Alibadeed is a historical-religious allusion that was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in "Surat Al-Fil."²⁵ Kachachi refers to that bird to indicate that strength lies in unity and solidarity. While the flocks of Alibadeed brought triumph to the

righteous in the Holy Qur'an, they become a symbol of dispersion in Kachachi's novel, that is, they are the warplanes of the Anglo-American invaders bombing the safe land and dispersing its people. Kachachi manipulates Alibadeed as a symbol to shed light on the problem of the immigrants who have their identities become sporadic.

Through memory and flashback, Kachachi recalls the history of Iraq since the fifth decade of the 20th century until now. Memories bear to Wardia's children a sense of bitterness and longing at the same time: "Memory is no longer able to capture their images. Wardia [tried]... to retrieve what she has lost. She fears that her memory may betray her"(118). The same reason that makes Wardia seek refuge in France pushes Jasmin to accept a husband who comes by correspondence. Through flashback, the readers relive the past when Jasmin was obliged to go to Dubai to wed a man she barely knew due to a terrorist group who threatened her family. The threatening letter is: "Peace be upon those who follow His guidance, you have only ten days to carry out this advisory opinion and give us your daughter as a legal wife to the prince of our congregation; otherwise, we will slay you all and take your house. You infidels to hell and woeful fate" (129). The mother takes the letter to her Muslim neighbor, Sheikh Dawood, who absolves Islam from the acts of these terrorists, describing them as "religious hypocrites, avid and fanatic" (130). Afterward, the young Palestinian Ghassan, who is living in Wardia's house, takes the threatening letter to the police station, but the police do not care about the complaint. Corruption and indifference of the police officer to the complaint of Wardia's family is part of the corruption of the internal system of the country. Instead of protecting the civilians from any threatening danger, the police eat "at the expense of the complainants" (132). The officer, finally, yields and writes a few lines to be signed by the owner of compliant. Not only does the writer criticize the internal system of the country but also she criticizes the occupiers describing them like lice or parasites feeding on the heads of their victim incapable of differentiating between the head of Chechen from Vietnamese's or Iraqi head. This image asserts that the same power, which has oppressed the Vietnamese and the Chechens, has oppressed the Iraqis. Here, Kachachi hints at the US government and its allies by resorting to Iraqi sayings to highlight her appreciation of the Iraqi ancestral heritage. What happened in Iraq decades ago repeats itself with the next authority. Chaos and corruption of the internal systems, insecurity and the irresponsible merciless control over the fate of people— are all aspects of internal terrorism. Consequently, attending religious services in both the church and the mosque may end with a catastrophe. It becomes difficult for the citizens to enjoy religious rituals and folkloric celebrations or even to live a normal life. Some have not only abandoned their countries but also have left their jobs. Jasmin abandons her job at the university because "going outside home becomes an unsafe adventure" (132). Her fiancé asks her hand from her brother via telephone and sends her a ring through Aramex international express, and then he delivers her at Dubai airport as if she were a package sent via a registered post. Despite her spiritual connection with her mother as well as her motherland, Jasmin departs "far away from a city suffocated with the dead incense"—it is Baghdad (132).

Furthermore, Kachachi depicts Iraq as one amiable family despite the multiplicity of its religions and nationalities. Humanity gathers Wardia and Alwiya Shathera together. When Wardia's daughter, Hinda, was born, her Muslim neighbor, Alwiya Shathera, raised the spirit of the Christian doctor to forget the experience of losing her previous infant Sarmad who died while he was only three months. In addition, Alwiya helped Wardia to find a babysitter to take care of

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Hinda. The first wet-nurse is called Shrara and the second is Bustana. They become part of the doctor's family. The blood of the Christian girl is mixed with the milk of two Muslim female villagers. Hence, Kachachi wants to prove that diaspora is a hybrid status that the Iraqis never know before.

However, the narrator relates the story of Hinda's immigration to Amman after the tragic Gulf War of 1991, Manitoba and finally Toronto. When Hinda migrates to Canada, she has seen thousand Iraqi citizens in Jordan rushed to Europe and to the nowhere: "They are being trained in camps with strict laws ... a good immigrant is an integrated immigrant," and "immigrant is a fugitive in the convention of the government" (195, 198). Salam, Hinda's husband, takes his family to Jordan then asks for asylum in Canada. He is an engineer who participates in Kuwait War. Hinda is terrified because she knows that thousands of retreating soldiers roam in a desert under the shadow of bombs. Her husband cannot escape because the punishment of escaping a battle is execution. Her husband returns after losing the war taking off his military uniform and wearing a dirty "Dishdasha" or dress to camouflage and avoid captivity. His flesh has been torn off after crawling on the burning sand on the road of death: "war was lost in advance and they want the hero to die to be celebrated as a martyr" (183). The author criticizes the former regime for stupidly getting involved in a war that has already been thwarted without prior study of the dreadful future consequences of a war of unequal forces.

Hinda was unable to acclimatize with a new status of the country after the events of 2003. Her life was thrown out by the diaspora in a remote region, Manitoba, where she has dealt with the Red Indians. In an epistolary form, the readers become familiar with Hinda's past as the narrator recalls several letters sent by Hinda to her mother to inform her that, like her mother, she becomes a doctor working in a protectorate for Native Americans. Her first patients are two young people in the mid of twentieth who suffer Hepatic cirrhosis. The Iraqi doctor does not yield to despair and she finally succeeds to treat the couple. After a year, Robert and Susanna talk about their experience to get rid of addiction to a crowd of young people from Fisher River. The wife says that "the affectionate hand that extended for them came from Baghdad" (220). The exiled doctor has great sentiment with her patients. The experience of exile makes her self-sacrificial and sympathetic with her patients.

As for Wardia's son, Buraq, when he is born Alwiya Shathra comes to bless him and kept a golden lira in the infant's swaddle and then reads verses from the Holy Qur'an to protect him, meanwhile Gerges's mother evokes all the Christian saints. Buraq was working with a contractor, Haji Abdul Hussein who died of a heart attack, in the renovation of schools in Baghdad. Death in Iraq spreads widely so that there is no time for grievance. Streets were crowded with black flags. The black color is worn commonly by Iraqis not as a new fashion but as a symptom of sorrow and death. Wardia remembered nothing just the color of death. Through objective correlative, the black color of the duck, swimming in one of the lakes in France that connotes optimism and peace, reminded Wardia of the ongoing mourning in her homeland as she moved "from funeral to funeral and from obsequies to obsequies. ... Relatives only met in funerals because excursions were unsafe and cities were divided according to sects" (131). Hence, the reader can observe a kind of **dark comedy** the author resorts to as a weapon to get around the hard reality: "What is happening in fact, in front of the eyes, is a kind of theater of the

absurd?"²⁶ Everything becomes black in a country where the jinx bird flows. Women black clothes, the black consolation billboards, the dilapidated facades of the buildings, the palm trees burned in orchards—are all reflections of dark comedy.

Every day Haji Abdul Husain attends more than one funeral without knowing who is dead. He is proud of his Shiite sect, yet, he is not driven by fanaticism or sectarianism. After his death, working with the new government becomes a danger and more dangerous with the foreigners. Therefore, Buraq decides to travel to Sana'a, applies for an asylum in France, then flies to Haiti and gets a contract with UNICEF to participate in the reconstruction of what is destroyed by earthquakes there. Wars, assassinations, and sectarian division have led to the migration of the minorities from Iraq and their dispersal in the countries of the world.

Environmental and ideological affiliation has never been a barrier in the relations among the members of the Iraqi society. Humanity and love do exist among Muslims and Christians and they never know what sectarianism means before the insanity of 2003. It is normal for Christians and Muslims to participate in the celebration of each other. The Christian contractor, Toma, says that he is vowing to Imam Ali's shrine in Najaf. Although Haji Abdul Hussein does not believe him, Buraq believes him saying that the Iraqis live as harmoniously as one whole body before being torn up into pieces. The evidence is that when he has been a young boy with long blond hair, wearing a golden cross around his neck, he shares the Muslims their religious rites regardless of religious differences. He does not know what religious fanaticism is. Wearing a black "Dishdasha," he participates in Ashura Al-Husseini processions and carries a catenary too. Dazzlingly, Haji Abdul Hussein screams, "A Christian hit with Zangil ... God is the greatest" (234). This situation makes the reader mentally and emotionally split between what Iraq was before and what it becomes after 2003. Before the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, there was no segregation between a Muslim, a Jew or Christian. All religious sects live peacefully in Iraq: "At that time, political clash did not ruin Iraqi social texture yet" (82). Like her son, Dr. Wardia, who believes in Jesus and Virgin Mary, has ties of love with Alwiya Shathra, who is "preparing Al-Qarayyat on Al-Hussein in Ashura" (171).

Rupture and dispersal among the Iraqi people is an alien phenomenon Iraq has never experienced before. Wardia and her Christian family use to live harmoniously and peacefully in Al-Diwaniyah nearby her Jewish and Muslim neighbors in an atmosphere full of peace and love. In Al-Qarayyat, Wardia weeps with the wailers on Al-Hussein. She does not cry on Gerges, Solomon, and Camel, or over longing for her grandchildren in Canada. She mourns the entire country while her eyes are petrified when she has seen women of the neighborhood are separated by sectarianism. She develops relationships based on love and respect with the Muslim and the Jewish inhabitants, and shares their rituals. The Christian doctor, Wardia, visits her Jewish neighbor, Jacob's mother, and gives her the seven eyes, which is an Iraqi folkloric icon that indicates the unity of the Iraqis despite their various religions. Although Jacob's mother and his family immigrate, the seven eyes remains a confirmation of goodwill. Moreover, her older brother, Suleiman, although he is a Christian, is fond of the Arabic language and when he wins the first rank among his classmates, he chooses a copy of the *Holy Qur'an* as a reward.

However, US occupation brings not only discernment and sectarianism but also terrorism. After the death of her husband and the migration of her sons, Wardia becomes a captive to nightmares. Nothing is left to her just "dull tears" and "hypnotic pills," to stop the "nightmares channel" (150) that haunts her every night. A young woman armed with dynamite

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visits her in endless nightmares. Wardia remembers a young bombing woman who comes to the clinic nervously crying "let me join you ... I am dying" (153). The doctor thinks that the terrified pale girl may get pregnant through a premarital relationship. Trying to remove the patient's dress, the patient refuses and shakes her head: "I do not want to die ... I do not want either to kill you or to die" (153). As a kind of self-defense mechanism, the image of her deceased husband Gerges, while on his deathbed, shines in Wardia's mind. Then, she hears the girl chattering like a prey shaken in front of a hunter's gun: "I do not want to die" (154). Wardia is unable to drop out from her mind the sight of that frightened girl who is refusing a "programmed death" (155-56).

This scene is liable to be both real and imaginary. The nightmare that does not abandon Wardia reflects the feelings of fear and insecurity stored in her unconscious mind. The unstable conditions of her country—embodied in killing, raping, kidnapping and other social problems caused by the war on Iraq, in addition to the death of her husband and the migration of her children—lead to the feelings of discontent to result in frequent nightmares. Besides, that Wardia lives a sense of fear and depression. Her loss of hope or even thinking of death may be caused by the diaspora. Wardia's family is turned into guests who meet eagerly in short visits after a long separation. The members of this family communicate through the social network. However, means of social communication are not enough to reunite the family again. The mother only hears their voices on the phone. Despite the fact that this family emigrates from a country that breathes the smell of blood to the secured countries, diaspora leaves its effect on Wardia's emotional status. Homesickness and longing for her ancestral roots remain an urgent need within Wardia's unconscious mind. Past is still embedded in her mind. As a result, it affects her ability of adoptability to the new life in Paris. In spite of war and the threat of terrorism, she is still linked to the legacy of the Iraqi civilization—the birthplace of her ancestors. The Christian family is scattered into pieces or "tashar" as the title of the novel suggests—Buraq lives in Haiti, Hinda in Canada and Jasmin in Dubai while the mother lives in Paris. The absence of the sense of love and security within the family, which is a miniature of the whole society, as well as within the nation, which is a large home, justifies the frequent nightmares haunting Dr. Wardia. On the other hand, the scene may be a reality, not a nightmare, since the process of remembering is an act that requires full consciousness. In other words, the process of remembering lies in the conscious mind, unlike dreams that are expressive symbols in the unconscious mind. This confusion between reality and fantasy and between consciousness and unconsciousness is another feature of magical realism, which is manipulated by the author to serve the concept of Diaspora.

Dr. Wardia's memory hammers painfully in her conscious mind. It is flowing spontaneously between the past and present and between reality and fantasy. Sometimes she feels that her memory is more painful than the impact of exile. She asks her nephew: "Do you think those who live in Basra, Aleppo, Kuwait City, Beirut, and Alexandria do not suffer from the hammer of memory? Do you think they do not suffer from the anguish of this troubling question: What has befallen us?" (117). She recalls her delightful childhood to comfort herself while she is living in a willful exile. Times turn in her head as she acknowledges her decision to take refuge willfully in France and "it was not true that she had abandoned her motherland because of the Pope's retreat from going to Ur. That is a trivial excuse ... rubbing her conscience

with it to relieve it from its debilitation" (129). Wardia refuses to emigrate with the immigrant doctors who are subject to assassination after the American invasion, or with Christians who are threatened by extremist organizations. Nevertheless, when she crosses her 80s, she moves to France after she losing all her children and can no longer stay alone in a country threatening the life of independent women, minorities, doctors, and university professors, as reflected below:

Tashari. That is what her nephew's daughter writes. They organize poetry of the dear ones who have dispersed and can no longer join them except on the Atlas maps. ... She does not want to slip into the trap of nostalgia. It is *a psychological disease* that attacks fragile people and hurts the defeated ... the unseen has been cunning with her and has pushed her to the far end. [Italics mine]. (Tashari, 151-52).

Kachachi sheds light on the emotional fragile structure of the heroine-doctor as she attempts to tame her stream of nostalgia and expresses the dispersion suffered by the Iraqis. She regrets the loss of her country and condemns the destruction of Iraq by "nitric acid" until it lost its features and becomes a swamp of chaos, bombings, and free death. She suffers from the identity crisis because her mind and spirit are scattered between adoption to her new life and nostalgia to her ancestral homeland. Being Kachachi's mouthpiece, Wardia feels nostalgia for her country the place she "punish[es] [herself] for abandoning it."²⁷ She has not tried to take off her Iraqi identity or to surrender to the grip of the homeland, even if she is living in the diaspora. Wardia will not die of addiction, but she "will be killed by the **disease of nostalgia** and that hypothetical life" (243). To talk about diaspora is for her a matter of life and death, the crime of uprooting a basic category of the Iraqi nation denying its originality, so that there are people who call it a "community," as if that land no longer tolerates the historical heritage of its people.²⁸ Pictures are the only thing Wardia carries with her from Baghdad to help her endure the harshness of the diaspora. She says that she "keep[s] watering a tree of photographs even if the soil of diaspora is difficult to be germinated" (187).

There are dozens of expatriate novelists, who continue to write while they are in the diaspora confined by the "shackles" of their homelands.²⁹ Although the writer came out of Iraq more than thirty years ago and lived in exile twice the age she lived in her homeland, her memory is the baggage that protects her from many obstacles. She also assimilates homesickness to the crazy love of Laila's mad lover. In this crazy love for the homeland, immigrants and residents are alike.³⁰ Kachachi adds that nostalgia is a psychological disease that infects her and the new expatriates. In another interview, the novelist contradicts what she has said earlier wondering "why do they call nostalgia a disease? If it is a disease, I will be happy to be sick and comfortable with this sickness and I wish to wake up in Baghdad."³¹ Nostalgia for Kachachi is not a disease, but a legacy she has inherited from her Basrawiya mother. She admits that if nostalgia is considered as a disease, she will feel happy and comfortable with that disease and she wishes to wake up every morning in Baghdad under the palm tree in the garden of her Iraqi home(land). For Kachachi, Iraq is both a disease and a remedy at the same time. Kachachi denies considering nostalgia to her country as a disease, but in her novel, she refers twice to the "disease of nostalgia" that exhausts her as well as the expatriates living in the diaspora. At the beginning of the novel, she considers longing for her homeland a **psychological illness**, but at the end of the novel, she declares herself drowning in a "**river of nostalgia** that will overwhelm us while we are alive. ... Longing for Baghdad flogs me every day and carries out the penalty of abandonment and denial on me" (243). Kachachi goes further stating that Iraq is "sickness," and

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is wounded, that Iraqis contribute to that wound, and that the US occupation is not less serious than what is committed by the Iraqis themselves to the right of their nation.³² She does not blame the intruders only, but also the sons of the country who let the intruders in.³³

Mohammed Hayawi says that this kind of self-flagellation or self-punishment that the heroine persists when she surrenders to her destiny and does not dare to triumph for her nation or even to return to its inferno at least. This reflects the writer's vulnerability to the changeable circumstances in her country and remains attached to it even if she is far away from it. Hayawi adds that the profound societal changes caused by wars and occupation are brewed in the collective memory of the writers to be later incarnated in the form of creative experiments, and that the more the writers occupy themselves with the painful memories of wars, national creativity, and local identity will almost be preserved to present to the world. The Iraqi novelist, a resident in Paris, inherits the air of Baghdad before it is stained by occupation and bombing. In Iraq of today "the mind is absented, slapping is present" and there is no consolation except in memory. She whispers to her nephew, "This is the sapphire of my life. My life without [Iraq] is in vain."³⁴

In Iraq of yesterday, political conflicts never spoiled the social fabric of Baghdad. In the first half of the novel, Kachachi says, "So was Iraq" before the policy distorted its relations and planted discord among its communities that were living in peace. While she was studying in the secondary school, Wardia became acquainted with four Muslim students, two Christians, and twelve Jewish students. She was charged to collect donate from students for the victims of demonstrations who were injured by the police gunshots. This mixed class is a miniature of a homogeneous amalgam of the Iraqi society wherefore citizens live harmoniously without knowing what the word sectarianism means. At that time political struggles did not tear up the societal texture of the Iraqi society that rose above to the status of Paradise if compared to what is happening in Iraq now that is pervaded by "Iraqis who are not Iraqis—marauders, head-cutters, infiltrators who pine out the medals of their crimes. The strongest among them is the most dangerous to the conqueror, sectarians asking about your sect before salutation."³⁵ The second half of the novel Kachachi says, "So is Iraq now" when the Iraqis have lost their past, even the family cemeteries, and have attached to an illusion. They have lost the days to gather them together. This is what remains of the beautiful past, which the Iraqis are trying to cling to it.³⁶

The writer laments her lost paradise. She conjures up the scars of the Iraqi pain between a beautiful past and a torn present where the Iraqis are only seeking a hypothetical grave.³⁷ In a country that is addicted to death, which is rooted in the Iraqi subconscious, a **hypothetical electronic cemetery** is evoked by Iskandar to make it a substitute for his lost homeland. He invents a computerized hypothetical electronic cemetery on the internet to bury his relatives and allocates a grave for each one of them after it becomes hard to assemble them in one cemetery. The idea of ec-cemetery was planted in Iskandar's head by his aunt. Iskandar is one of the new generation of exile who grows up in isolation far away from the original roots. In trying to adapt to the alien world, the middle generation of immigrants fears the disappearance of their inevitable ancestral heritage among the cultures of people in the land of the diaspora.³⁸ Therefore, they remain loyal to the civilization of their country by listening to the stories of their fathers as with Iskandar. Wardia helps her nephew, Iskandar, to learn how to speak Iraqi dialect

and how to pronounce Iraqi terminologies correctly. She also pushes him to know even the tiny details about his country—the birthplace of his father.

Kachachi declares that the idea of the electronic cemetery is a miraculous, frantic need of human beings who have lost their native land. They, in their compulsory diaspora, carry the tendency of death away from their homeland to be buried in a foreign soil.³⁹ In a cynical way, she embodies death in the idea of the ec-cemetery. Therefore, it is not difficult for the immigrants to imagine their bodies lying in one of those foreign tombs that are lined geometrically.⁴⁰ This project resuscitates Iskandar's relationship with the country he belongs to but he never knows and helps him to familiarize with the social/cultural legacy of his ancestors. The electronic cemetery is an image that means even death and life of man becomes hypothetical.⁴¹ Booking graves for the livings as if the Iraqi immigrants are more concerned with their graves than with the rest of their lives cut between a happy past despite its illness, and a present devoted to the diaspora. Since the conditions of Iraq make it difficult to ship the dead bodies from the areas reached by diaspora, so it becomes necessary to invent a hypothetical cemetery that gathers the bones of the immigrants.⁴² The ec-cemetery becomes an ideal haven for multi-purpose death. Instead of becoming a computer engineer, Iskandar gets a job as a gravedigger in his hypothetical e-cemetery. He starts his project to be a temporary solution to satisfy people who are scattered across distant continents. This imaginary world enables Wardia to reunite the members of her family, albeit only hypothetically, after they have been dispersed; hence, Iskandar's imaginary e-cemetery helps Wardia to fulfill a desire she has never been able to achieve in reality. Some immigrants find in the e-cemetery a magical and pleasant solution to face diaspora. Suhaila Yunnan, one of the displaced characters in the novel, asks Iskandar to make a grave for her deceased son, Ra'ad, next to his father who died in Kuwait War. They kidnap her only son and ask her for a ransom, yet her son never comes. The abduction of a peaceful civilian from his/her home, asking for ransom and throwing the victim in uninhabited or ruinous places— becomes a normal phenomenon in Iraq; therefore, it becomes difficult to accommodate all the dead even in putative cemeteries. Suhaila's son is found among piles of unidentified corpses in the morgue of Kadhimiya Hospital. When nobody comes to pick him up, he is buried in Najaf cemetery. In the past, Iraq was a safe country, but unfortunately, after 2003 everything was turned topsy-turvy: "Things were not the same in the past," said Wardia (170). Suhaila cannot visit her deceased son in Najaf cemetery because "the road to Najaf is a death road, checkpoints, sectarian searches, and the bullet is for free." (170).

Wardia's stories make Iskandar feel disgusted; they are more horrible than the horror films he has ever seen. She continues relating the calamitous story of Suhaila and her son. After the exhumation of the grave, the old priest removes the corpse of Ra'ad, and Suhaila hurries to hug her dead son while the smell of the dead fills the place. The priest Francis volunteers to accompany Suhaila to Najaf to fetch the body of her dead son. She borrows a cloak from her neighbor while the priest Francis takes off his black cloak and wears a dress and a headband. The deceased son is buried in Chaldean cemetery near Tayaran Square after he has been dispatched from the Valley of Peace in Najaf. Suhaila buries the bones of her husband in a new cemetery in Khan Bani Saad after the government has monopolized the old cemetery that has been a lucrative investment project where "One square meter in Tayaran Square equals millions; millions of dollars would be collected from the sale of that vast land" (175). After the events of 2003 not only the living Iraqis are displaced from their homes, but even the dead are displaced after the

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theft of their graves by "an investor from the government to build a hotel on it... ." (175). The official excuse is that the health conditions do not permit the existence of a graveyard amidst Baghdad for fear of environmental pollution; therefore, Iraqi Christians are forced to transfer their graves to Khan Bani Saad, "The state has assigned for each tribe its own graveyards" (175). Suhaila becomes excited with joy when Iskandar collects the remains of her deceased husband and her son in his e-graveyard and sets up a grave for her near them. Her family suffered from diaspora like the other Christian families. Only in the hypothetic world, the members of Suhaila Yunnan's family are able to assemble in one place that never exists in the real world.

In a magic surrealist scene, Iskandar succeeds to accumulate the bones of his relatives from the graves of the Gulf, Levant, Detroit, New Zealand, and the suburbs of London, to rest peacefully in a neutral hypothetical land, bringing together men and women who have slept on one pillow and then have dispersed to die in the Western soil. "The bird of Alibadeed flew over Iraq, exterminated people and threw them into the vast land of God," and it "made the tombs of their fathers and families sporadic" (159, 191). Another surrealist scene, which is one of the characteristics of magic realism, is the description of the dead in the e-cemetery. As the number of the dead increased, the cemetery expands to become:

[A]shrine to multi-lateral death. ... Whenever a new inhabitant comes carrying his skeleton on his shoulders while his strength is leaking out, his dead relatives blow up from their graves laughing and dancing around the newcomer... the electronic nymphs speed up to wash his bones with saffron and to enshroud his weakness with the palm fronds. He comes to the womb of his family... and is welcomed among them. The livings have the right to broadcast music and songs that he loves and choose the types of flowers to be scattered around his grave. The newcomer, from Kowloon, sleeps next to his wife who has brought her bones from Einkawa while their sons are distributed among cemeteries in Erbil, Oakland, and Germana... . A click on the website and I can... see pictures of children died of malnutrition, polluted water, and radioactive weapons. A click on the keyboard and they are all thrown on the chests of their mothers who are killed by a suicide bombing in Dora district, or the massacre of Fallujah, or drowned under Al-A'ma Bridge, or in Saydat Al-Najat Church. ... Click more and you shall see parents who are kidnapped and not found, who are buried anonymously, or who are slaughtered with their heads cut in a sectarian count ... The dead appear and spread their arms to embrace their wives and children. (*Tashari*, 238-40)

In this surrealist satirical tragic scene, the writer describes a group of the dead who celebrate the coming of a newcomer to their ec-cemetery dancing and singing joyfully for his coming because they have been scattered when they have been alive and have met only after death. The dead rise from their graves, remove their coffins and seek a path towards the intimate soil. The e-cemetery includes civilians who are victims of malnutrition, contaminated water, radioactive weapons and suicide bombings —such as the tragedy of Al-A'ma Bridge and Saydat Al-Najat Church. Dozens of civilians from all religions and sects are victimized. Terrorism and colonization (two faces of the same coin) targets everyone and does not distinguish between a Christian or Muslim, Sunni or Shiite. The episode of Iskandar and his e-cemetery can be considered a piece of magic realism that achieves its effects by making the character's perception marvelous. In magic realist literature, fantastic things are told in a very matter-of-fact way. The idea of e-cemetery is

described as if it is a normal thing. Kachachi makes the fantastic story of the e-cemetery seem more realistic as if it could actually happen. Magic Realism is all about mixing up the fantastic with the mundane, the ordinary with the extraordinary, reality and unreality. However, Iskandar is shocked when his aunt, Wardia, suddenly has withdrawn from the electronic cemetery declaring that it is just a game. Iskandar's mother postulates:-

My son does not believe that we are people of coups and betrayals until the guests of his graveyard rise up one after the other, rubbing their eyes ... strip off their gel bodies of roses and stuff butterflies squeezing the palms and re-dangling with shrouds. They carry their favorite cassettes and pillows stuffed with goose feathers and go where they come from. They do not cut the distances to the tombs of the immigrants in all continents, but all go to their birthplace. ... They come, withdraw the symbolic deposit, take pictures and cassettes of music, and then apologize for rejecting stagnation. (Tashari, 246)

The dead either refuse to die in the diaspora and or prefer death in their homelands. Iskandar wants to know the reason for the withdrawal of his aunt. Wardia teaches him never to yield and not to take it seriously so that he can continue. She never yields to the feeling of homesickness or alienation. Life for her is "endless friendships, betrayals, and surprises. Nothing worth enmity and tears" (246). She flatters Iskandar in his e-cemetery game because the idea motivates her imagination, cures her nostalgia. She declares at the end of the novel that the e-cemetery idea is a "beautiful illusion in a barren time," and that she gets satisfied from the "shackles of illusions" (247). She quits the world illusion and returns to reality.

The novel ends tragically predicting the current situation of the country. It ends with a piece of advice that the aunt says to her grandson as if she is saying to the Iraqi nation "the whole life is a game" (247). Kachachi declares that optimistic conclusions are possibly exaggerated; this is why "you see my novels open on dark ends."⁴³ Therefore, the open end of the story confirms the Iraqis endless pain and the hunger for blood is still at its height.⁴⁴ It is a "great country, beaten by the curse of Diaspora and turns into a disfigured beast. ... Have they ever satiated their thirst for blood?"(251). Anam Kachachi directs a rhetorical question, which persists until at least this moment, to her country. She finally leaves the conclusion of the novel to the reader's imagination; perhaps some readers draw an optimistic conclusion where prosperity prevails over bloodshed.

TASHARI FROM A TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE

The writer utilizes the narrative techniques to embody the concept of Diaspora in her novel through the manipulation of language, narration, as well as time/space components.

Kachachi reinforces the concept of Diaspora by using the Iraqi local dialect and by choosing the title of her novel to portray the state of the Iraqi immigrants who live in the diaspora. She is not telling a story of a leading Iraqi doctor, but a blog of the Iraqi lost, feeding her text with popular proverbs, legends, as well as vocabulary. She recites passages from famous Iraqi songs to tell a story about a devastated country "where relatives only meet in funerals."⁴⁵ She does not leave the scars of Iraq in its diaspora; rather, she intends to enrich her novel with words from the Iraqi heritage to express her belonging to the country of her ancestors. Khalid Mutlaq, an Iraqi poet, confirms that Kachachi owns the secrets of the modern novel, as she uses a very clear language that is not necessarily a figurative language. Away from using images and metaphors vaguely, the novel today, in the opinion of Mutlaq, does not need ambiguity or complexity.⁴⁶ This is clear in the language of most of the characters in the novel. The language

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of the heroine, for instance, includes local vocabulary from the South and North of Iraq, thus, she gives the text its distinctive Iraqi flavor. Among those words is "tashar" in the title, which refers to the shot of a hunting rifle that is distributed in several directions, in reference to the current Iraqi diaspora.⁴⁷ The word "tashar" means division and fragmentation. The writer chooses a word from the Iraqi dialect then explains its meaning in the context. With regard to the word "tashar," the executive editor of *Al-Mada Newspaper*, Adnan Hussein, states that the novel is an attempt to echo a country that is leaking in installments and migrations since the 1950s, millions of Iraqis are scattered in the world as a shotgun scattered in all directions.⁴⁸

Another narrative technique that reflects the concept of Diaspora in the novel is time/space component. Abdullah Maksour postulates that *Tashari* delves into a human psyche within an integrated hierarchical structure of mobile time sometimes and constant most of the time, and places overlapping across several cities, starting from Mosul to Baghdad and then to Al-Diwaniya moving outside Iraq to the United Arab Emirates, Toronto and then to Paris.⁴⁹ Maksour asserts that the idea of an alternative homeland does not exist in Kachachi's artworks; hence, she resorts to the details that can connect her with Iraq. The writer adds that Kachachi dedicates her artworks searching for her roots; this is reflected in her overall work. Nevertheless, Hassan Sarhan states that Kachachi has achieved very a limited progress in the time/space techniques due to her interest in the semantic contextual content more than her artistic interest.⁵⁰ Although the novel moves vastly through time and spatial transitions which spans more than eight decades from the 1950s to the present time, and places which vary in environments and social conditions, the narrator is able to weave the narrative time and spatial transitions accurately and craftily. The narrator creates a map of a repressed nation immigrants are clinging to, living their present in the West, and regressing the beautiful past they have lived in their land—a past distorted by dictatorship and overthrown by occupation.⁵¹ Recalling the past through memories and flashback covers most of the narrative space. Since the major narrative space is related in the form of memories and flashback, which are subject to the internal condition of the storyteller, that is, time is repetitive and is exposed to permanent break. There are numerous narrative paradoxes between the time of storytelling and the narrative time in *Tashari*. As long as the text is based, in essence, on the concept of Diaspora, the heroine does not necessarily commit herself to remembering what has happened chronologically; rather, her memory progresses, delays, anticipates, recovers, accelerates and slows down. For this reason, in any novel based on the process of remembering, narrative paradox increases in it. On the other hand, the writer embodies the concept of Diaspora in the time component as the reader explores the memory of the heroine and sees a smooth cinematic transition between the distant past and the near past to be compared to the present. This smooth cinematic transition from time to time is an embodiment of diaspora, which includes not only the dispersion of identity but also the dispersion of the heroine's memory. The temporal-spatial mobility that the writer is capable of pushes Kachachi to choose the word "tashar" for her novel.

That time does not progress chronologically indicates the embodiment of magic realism in the novel. The narrative text is based on recalling the past through flashback and memory wondering temporally and spatially in the heroine's mind around the world.⁵² Time, in magic realism, is not linear or predictable. It sometimes loops back instead of moving forward, or it

zigzags all over the place, or skips forward, or stays still and does not move. Time discrepancies are noticeable when the difference between the time of the storytelling and the time of the narrative extends to the long years as in the scene of Wardia's entry into Elysee Palace. However, at other times, the narrative difference narrows between the two times to reach just months or days. These different temporal patterns are intertwined in *Tashari*, they and gain the text a complex time structure. Wardia follows a selective approach in what she wants to narrate to her niece. Unlike the Surrealists, remembering is not an involuntary unconscious mechanism that is associated with the main feelings of the heroine, but it is rather an artificial, objective retrieval that is not devoid of intent periods in the past that was lived by Wardia. Wardia depicts diaspora figuratively saying, "It is now 7 o'clock in Paris, Nine in Baghdad, ten in Dubai. They are still in the middle of the last night in Manitoba. One after midnight in Haiti" (17). These times do not refer to wall clocks, but time here is a pre-emptive act announcing Iraqi Diaspora in the four quarters of the world. Hence, the word "tashar" leads to an important point: place, to which the title refers. Hassan Sarhan asserts that place or the spatial structure of the novel, like time, is one of the important elements of the novel, and that the narrative events cannot occur outside its frame. It is a predominant narrative component and the basic cornerstone on which this narrative text is constructed. Sarhan criticizes Kachachi of paying a magnificent attention to the time component at the expense of the space component.⁵³ Throughout her memories, Wardia leads the readers to her country. Subsequently, she departs Iraq in her 80s to Paris. Her children depart to different places a long time before their mother's departure: Dubai, Manitoba, Toronto, Haiti, and Paris—a thing that makes Wardia feel fragmented.

However, the researcher disagrees with Hassan Sarhan and confirms that the interest shown by the writer in the use of the space component is not less than the importance of the time component. Kachachi embodies the concept of Diaspora technically and thematically, that is, the reader can follow this concept horizontally and vertically. S/he must follow it in the narrative events as well as in the narrative form or structure. Diaspora embodies fragmentation of the space component as Kachachi makes Wardia move from Mosul to Baghdad and then to Al-Diwaniyah to migrate to France moving through her imagination to Dubai where Jasmin married, to the Caribbean islands where Buraq lives, and to Toronto and Manitoba in Canada where Hinda lives.

Moreover, the novelist assigns an important part of the novel to the daughter of Suleiman, Wardia's brother. Technically, the novel is based on the multiplicity of narrators. Khalil Sweileh postulates that *Tashari* is a "mural of sorrow." It is not a decadent biography of an afflicted family but a story of a country its viscera are torn apart and are difficult to be renovated easily. Therefore, the narrator(s) regain(s) the career of Shehrazad.⁵⁴ The novel is told by a third omniscient narrator, which starts relating the opening scenes of the novel, and then Wardia's Moroccan driver relates the scene not knowing where he was going to take this woman from a refugee building. Wardia's niece, a resident of Paris, reviews the panorama of Iraq's social and political crisis narrates the third chapter and most of the pages of the novel. The young Iskandar, Wardia's grandson, relates the events in chapter fourteen. Then the third omniscient narrator resumes narration in the last chapter of the novel. Wardia chooses a strange storyteller to give the story objectivity. She does not choose the "I" to tell the story, instead, she prefers to narrate in the form of a third person narrator to maintain a narrative distance to ensure the objectivity of the text. Despite this objectivity in the context of the novel, *Tashari* falls significantly at the end of

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the novel to be concluded by its primary narrator, Wardia who utters a direct question that expresses condemnation and a direct accusation and: "Have they ever satiated their thirst for blood?" (251). This direct question posed leads to a question of another kind about the narrator's boundaries to stop in the novel. It is reasonable to say that the boundaries of the narrator do not end with mere telling and presentation of the events of the story, but the writer is trying to express a certain point of view.⁵⁵ Using the multi-narrator technique, Kachachi aims at telling the story of a dispersed country from several viewpoints, hence, that the concept of Diaspora is embodied technically in multiple narrative views that converge at one point.

CONCLUSION

Tashari is a cry against sectarianism, annihilation, and cancellation. It is not about the dispersion of Iraqi Christians. Dr. Wardia migrates to France, not because of the harassment of Muslims, but because the climate in her homeland becomes contaminated by sectarianism, and because power becomes in the hands of thieves and criminals.

Sectarianism, a curse that hits Iraq lately turning it into a hell, assaults Iraq after the Anglo-American invasion. The period of the attack by the Anglo-American coalition forces is one of the worst periods that Iraq has experienced. The only place remains safe for the civilians to fortify themselves from the US warplanes bombing is the graves where the dead lay. Because of the Anglo-American coalition forces raid in Iraq, life has stopped and everything has been broken, no electricity, no gas, no security, no sufficient food and no emergent medication. Everything and everybody are targeted by the warplanes. All livelihoods and the infrastructure of the country are destroyed. Because of the oil wells that have been burned to camouflage the colonial warplanes, the sky becomes as dark as the somber night; black rain blackens the walls of buildings: "Walls have turned black, suffocating the older people, and subsiding the children out of fear of the empty looks in the eyes of adults" (182-83).

Sectarianism, the policy of the tyrants and the US invasion have turned Iraq into a mess. Despite Wardia's meeting with the Pope of the Vatican, yet she feels strange. She emphasizes that national pride is greater than sectarian affiliation. Dispersion of Iraqi Muslims is not less than the dispersion of Iraqi Christians. Wardia lives for eighty years and works as a doctor in the countryside where her friends belong to different religions and sects. A person like her could not be happier in Vatican than in Al-Diwaniyah. Religion is a haven of life, but homeland is the land of love and identity that everyone holds since the first birth cry. So is Dr. Wardia who is a gynecologist who has witnessed the first cries of thousands of babies in her country. She lives the history of Iraq with all its periods but she is unable to believe that Iraq falls into "the grip of the devil" (183) and is chewed by the jaws of the devil. With the increased level of the absurd destructive conflicts among the opponents of the political process, Kachachi feels that she no longer belongs to her motherland, and that the motherland is no longer part of her. She associates motherhood with her motherland. Both are the fountain of a decent life; therefore, "without mothers, nations lose their salt" (202). Kachachi does not aim at reflecting reality or history as it is, rather, she wants to reach out to the readers to know, through literature, how to see beyond the ordinary, holding on a moment that is almost strewn and splits millions of Iraqis around the world. A family scattered around the world while the mother remains alone. The motherland

does not expand to embrace its sons, who are scattered across the continents and have no choice but to die and to be buried in a hypothetical world. Wardia brings a map to specify the time differences between the island of Haiti, where Buraq lives, Toronto the residence of Hinda and the timing of Dubai where Jasmin lives. She hopes that her sons "will be reunited in one place, one country or even in one continent" (150). The message of the novel is that humanity can bring together under its banner all people regardless of their different political and religious sects. A vast Iraqi society emerges from the accumulation of migrations and still expands. One reason for the mass extermination of Iraqi culture is America. The plan to occupy Iraq works out as expected in 2003 and from that date until now, intruders attempt to devastate it by Al-Qaida, terrorists and now Da'ash (ISIS). *Tashari* was published before Da'ash attack of Iraq, and before the minority displacement; nevertheless, the author anticipates what has happened in Mosul at the hand of Da'ash. However, after **Iraqi Diaspora**, there comes the Syrian and Yemeni Diaspora.

In diaspora literature, there are times of love, goodness, safety and peaceful coexistence, and times of hatred, war, drought, and chaos. Although Diaspora Literature enriches the literary context with a heavy code of painful memories and reflects the tragedy of immigrants and, it is not without a positive side. At the end of the novel, Wardia, being the mouthpiece of the author, reaches to a belief that life does not stop on leaving one's own country. Wardia's life is torn between different places, under the weight of devastation that besieges her in her old age; she refuses to immigrate to Canada. However, more frightening siege forces her to go to Paris where she contemplates her grave in the ec-cemetery as a kind of compensation for the loss of her life in the diaspora. She passes through the stages of nostalgia, but settles her accounts with the past and goes on to build the present and the future. Migrants can start their life again even in diaspora: "A good Iraqi is a good immigrant?"(249). Oppressed citizens leave a "country of a thousand woes and woes" (249). The pain that they have received and continue to receive are endless like the stories of *A Thousand Nights and Nights*. The writer sarcastically replaces the word night by "woes." Instead of relating tales of Shahrazad, the readers will read about a country of "a thousand woes and woes," or the "Atlas of woes." The story will branch out into a search of the ancestral roots. Although it is the cause of woes, uprooting, and death, Iraq is always present as a mantra that protects the lives of its citizens from destruction. Nevertheless, life never ends. Diaspora opens the gate to receive Iraqi immigrants and it offers them a chance to intermingle with Arabs and to share knowledge. The story of Iskandar and Kulthum is not unique in a city like Paris, where thousands of Arab immigrants find solace in the midst of their own people. Iraq was free of sectarianism and was inclusive of various Arab nationalities— a thing, which is no longer available after the Arab states have closed their borders to Iraqi citizens. Kachachi shows the same paradox in the friendship between Iskandar and the Tunisian girl Kulthum who falls in love with an Iraqi man but in a western country.

The researcher concludes that the Anglo-American's invasion and what follows such as enigmatic murders, kidnapping, stealing the national treasure, bombing and obscure military gangs have led Iraqi families, especially the minorities to escape everywhere throughout the world turning them into disarray families searching for safety and stability in spite of their affection to Iraq. The matter is not being a Christian, Jewish or Muslim but who slaughters for the sake of *The Holy Qur'an*, *The Gospel* or *Torah* are only mongers who instead of using

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religion in the service of humanity to be guided to happiness, they turn religion into a trade of killing. Therefore, it is not the crime of religion rather than of man.

NOTES

¹ Hiber, "The Theme of Diaspora in *Tashari*: I Wrote about What I Know and Saw," an Interview by Dina Al-Hawari Hiber, *Newsletter*, Feb. 5, 2014, <https://www.7iber.com/2014/02/inaamkachachiinterview/> (accessed Aug. 4, 2017).

² Ibid.

³ Mohammed Al-Mazdawi, "Anam Kachachi: I will Punish myself for Abandoning Iraq," *Alaraby*, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/supplementculture/2016/> (accessed July 24, 2017).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Middle East Online, "Inam Kachachi Won the French 'LaGuardia' Award," 2016, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=232276> (accessed July 24, 2017).

⁶ Al-Mazdawi.

⁷ Mohammed Abdul Samia, "Inam Kachachi: The Novel is a Conflict with the Self," *The Union*, Dec. 5, 2014, <http://www.alittihad.ae/details.php?id=108870&y=2014> (accessed Aug. 1, 2017).

⁸ Wikipedia, s.v. "Inam Kachachi" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inaam_Kachachi, 2014 (accessed Aug. 1, 2017).

⁹ Kill. D. Bulter, "Defining Diaspora: Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, (Fall 2001): 189.

¹⁰ Robin Cohen. *Global Diaspora: An introduction*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), 83.

¹¹ Wikipedia, s.v. "The New Diaspora," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_diaspora (Accessed Nov. 11, 2016).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring 1991): 83.

¹⁴ Cohen, 8.

¹⁵ Masko Adrianna, "Religious Conflicts after the 2003 Invasion of Iraq Reflected in Contemporary Iraqi Prose Works," www.questia.com, (accessed July 23, 2016).

¹⁶ Wikipedia, s.v. "The New Diaspora."

¹⁷ Majid Al Qaisi, "Colloquial Baghdadiya Language and Longing for the Homeland," *Akhbaar*, August 21, 2008, http://www.akhbaar.org/home/2008/08/523_24.html (accessed Nov. 2, 2016).

¹⁸ Ibid. Slang words are as a living cell in some respects, in that, they are born, nurtured, then grow old and die. In other words, the life cycle of the slang words is associated with the life of connotations; they may live for a long time or die in a short time. On the other hand, it is impossible to determine the time when the Iraqi vernacular was originated exactly. It could be argued it began probably at the time of the Islamic conquest of Iraq, at the beginning of the 7th century since the Sumerian first era more than six thousand years ago. Old Iraqi people were talking the Semitic language of the Sumerian and non-Semitic languages as Akkadian that includes (Babylonian and Assyrian), Aramaic, and Arabic. Iraqi Kurdish people in the north were talking old Kurdish languages that were Indian, Iranian- Indian, European languages, along with the official Semitic language. The official language of the state after the occupation was Persian and Aramaic. Therefore, the influence of the Persian language was expected. The Persians occupied Iraq for more than a thousand years until they were expelled at the hands of Arab Muslims in the early 7th century. In the first Iraqi vernacular language, there were also remnants of other

different languages such as Hebrew, Indian, and Greek. Standard Arabic spread in all parts of Iraq after the Islamic rule while Aramaic language deported to the northern and north eastern regions, where it flourished on the outskirts of Mosul and in the Kurdish provinces. Having entered the realm of life, Arabic faced a torrent of derived words from ancient Iraqi language and Persian language because of the cohesion of the indigenous people with the Arab tribes that settled in the western sections and the ones that came with the Islamic campaign. Hence, the Iraqi dialects began to emerge slowly.

¹⁹ Iman Al-Bustani, "A Cup of Coffee with Inam Kachachi," *Algardenia.com*, October 1, 2012, <http://algardenia.com/fanjanqahwa/876-2015-10-05-20-35-30.html> (accessed Aug. 1, 2017).

²⁰ Inam Kachachi, *Tashari*, trans. Aseel Kadhim (Beirut: Aljadeed, 2013), 33. All subsequent references to the novel are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the research.

²¹ Dar Al-Hayat, "Tashari a Novel by the Iraqi Novelist Anam Kachachi," <http://www.laha-mag.com/Details/> (accessed July 24, 2017).

²² Abdullah Maksoor, "Migrations are Daughters of Wars: Tragedy of the Iraqi Diaspora in Many Exiles," *The Arabs*, no. 10390 (2016):15.

²³ Al-Mazdawi.

²⁴ Maksoor, 15.

²⁵ In "Surat Al-Fil"(The Elephant), God said, "In the name of Allah the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. O Muhammad! Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the owners of the Elephant? {1} Did He not make their plot go astray? {2} And He sent against them birds, in flocks striking them with stones of baked clay.{3} And He made them like stalks has been eaten up. {4}" One of the blessings that God granted to Quraysh is that while the owners of the Elephant decided to destroy Makkah with their huge elephants, God scattered them by sending folks of birds, each bird was carrying three stones, flying over to throw stones on them until they fell down and went away. Some religious interpretations state that Alibabil were birds that lived together as folks and this union made them won the fight against the King of Ethiopia, Abraha Al-Ashram. *The Noble Qur'an*, "Al-Fil," trans. by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Madinah Munawara: Glorious Qur'an Printing Complex, 2015) 30:1-4.

²⁶ Al-Ayyam Press, "We Won't Compete on our Entitlement to Death or the Legitimacy of Expressing a Tragedy," 2016, http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=110276e2y285374178Y110276e2 (accessed July 24, 2017).

²⁷ Al-Mazdawi.

²⁸ Ala Othman, "Inam Kachachi: My Memory is my Greatest Share of a Homeland That Expels its Sons," *Aliraqia*, Mar 28, 2014, <http://www.youm7.com/story/2014/> (accessed Aug. 1, 2017).

²⁹ Al-Mazdawi.

³⁰ Al-Ayyam Press.

³¹ Al-Bustani.

³² Al-Ayyam Press.

³³ Al-Mazdawi.

³⁴ Middle East Online.

³⁵ Muqdad Masud, "Homes their Keys at the Walls of Migration," *Azzaman*, April 22, 2014, <https://www.azzaman.com/azzamanmobile/index.php/archives/69825> (accessed July 30, 2017).

³⁶ Lamea Abbas Amara, "Inam Kachachi: Tashari," *Arab Jerusalem*, March 2014, <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=140670?shared=email&msg=fail> (accessed July 24, 2017).

³⁷ Khalil Sweileh, "Inam Kachachi: Blog of the Iraqi Stray," *Al-Akhbar*, no. 2130, Oct. 18, 2013, <http://al-akhbar.com/node/193264> (accessed July 25, 2017).

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- ³⁸ Ahmed Awad Al-Khuzai, "Reduction of the Iraqi Times in *Tashari*," *Aldiyar London*, Feb. 16, 2017, <http://www.Aldiyarlondon.com/2012-08-09-12-36-20/1-articles/19294-2017-02-16-21-44-12> (accessed July 24, 2017).
- ³⁹ Dar Al Hayat.
- ⁴⁰ Hiber.
- ⁴¹ Cohen, 4.
- ⁴² Al-Ayyam Press.
- ⁴³ Al-Mazdawi.
- ⁴⁴ Hiber.
- ⁴⁵ Sweileh.
- ⁴⁶ Hiber.
- ⁴⁷ Dar Al-Hayat.
- ⁴⁸ Al-Mashat.
- ⁴⁹ Maksoor, 15.
- ⁵⁰ Hassan Sarhan, "The Technique of Reversing the Point of View within Elements of Narrative Discourse," *Alsabaah Newspaper*, April 23, 2014, http://www.alsabaah.iq/Article_Print.aspx?ID=69631 (accessed Aug. 3, 2017).
- ⁵¹ Al-Khuzai.
- ⁵² Kareem Jabar Al-Nasri, "Poetic Narration in Inam Kachachi's Novel *Tashari*," *Iraq Alyoum*, Nov. 26, 2014, <http://iraqalyoum.net/news.php?action=view&id=38725> (accessed July 30, 2017).
- ⁵³ Sarhan.
- ⁵⁴ Sweileh.
- ⁵⁵ Sarhan.

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